

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-22NEW YORK TIMES
17 November 1984

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Letters

**The Misjudgment
That Lost in Saigon**

To the Editor:

A Nov. 2 news article cited Lieut. Gen. Daniel O. Graham, intelligence director of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1974-75, as telling the libel trial of Gen. William C. Westmoreland against CBS that South Vietnam would have prevailed if the United States had not "slashed" military aid to it in 1974.

Yet, the former Central Intelligence Agency analyst Frank Snepp stated in 1977 ("Decent Interval," page 161) that the South Vietnamese received "roughly twice the amount of military assistance (in dollar terms) that had gone to Hanoi" in the year preceding the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975.

Another source (Indochina Issues, August 1983, page 11) goes so far as to state that "the value of military supplies Saigon lost" in 1975 "was greater than the total amount of military aid sent to Hanoi by the Soviet Union and China combined throughout the whole course of the war."

Disputes between the intelligence services may have continued after the war, but they should not obscure the true reasons for the Communist victory of 1975 in Vietnam. Those reasons have far less to do with Washington's reduction in aid to Saigon — from \$2.27 billion in 1973 to \$1.01 billion in 1974 and to \$700 million in 1975 — than with the contrast between the effectiveness of the Communists' organization and the ineffectiveness of their enemies. And that contrast goes back at least to 1945, when Ho Chi Minh first came to power in Vietnam, and to all the events that followed.

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New York, Nov. 7, 1984

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